

Wayne Allard

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Contact: Sean Conway
(202) 224-6207
Kelly Brady
(202) 224-5946

ALLARD PUSHES MILITARY VOTER AMENDMENT AMENDMENT IMPROVES VOTING STANDARDS FOR MILITARY PERSONNEL

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Senator Wayne Allard (R-CO) has sponsored an amendment to the Defense Authorization Bill (S. 1438) that would enhance the voting ability of absentee military voters. Allard's amendment, The Military Voter Support Amendment, would strengthen absentee military voters ability to vote by addressing many of the problems which currently impede their ability to cast a vote or have that vote counted while serving their country in the military.

"We owe it to our service men and women and their dependants and spouses to ensure that they too can enjoy the rights and freedoms they dedicate their lives to protecting," Allard said. "I am sponsoring this amendment to help ensure that our men and women in uniform do not have their right to vote questioned or even compromised while they are serving our country."

The Military Voter Support Amendment would help ensure that technical faults beyond the control of the voter would not endanger the legitimacy of absentee military ballots. In addition, it would improve voting ability by increasing voting access for recently separated military personnel and allowing polling places to be operated on military installations. The amendment also grants the Secretary of Defense flexibility in conducting a demonstration program for an electronic voting program and makes states more accountable for improving the voting ability of its absentee voters.

"In the weeks and months ahead our military men and women are going to be successfully waging the war on terrorism," Allard added. "I hope this legislation proves to our uniformed voters how we value their service to our country and ensure their voice is heard at the ballot box."

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Allard's Military Voter Support Amendment enhances the voting ability of absentee military voters in five key ways:

1) Prohibits a state from disqualifying a ballot based upon lack of postmark or witness signature alone. The current bill merely says States have to provide military voters a "meaningful opportunity to exercise their voting rights." The Allard amendment strikes this and substitutes language saying that a State cannot discard a ballot "...unless the State finds clear and convincing evidence of fraud...."

2) Allows polling places (at Secretary of Defense discretion) to be operated on military installations to serve military voters and others U.S. citizens.

3) Military voters who are discharged and move before an election but after the residency deadline cannot vote through the military absentee ballot system, and sometimes are not able to fulfill deadlines to establish residency in a State. This amendment allows them to use the proper discharge forms as a residency waiver and vote in person at their new polling site.

4) Allows Secretary of Defense to have an electronic voting demonstration instead of mandating that he must conduct such a demonstration.

5) Following each election the Pentagon Federal Voting Assistance Program makes recommendations to each State on ways to improve the voting ability of absentee voters by State statute changes. This amendment brings more attention to bear on these improvements (and hopefully generates more state legislature interest) by requiring the States to report on their implementation of these suggestions to the Secretary of Defense.

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